

(Washington, DC)— At the urging of Congresswoman Gwen Moore, a bill before the U.S. House of Representatives today contains a provision that would require an appropriate medical practitioner to evaluate a service member for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury (TBI) before that service member is separated involuntarily from the military or given anything other than an honorable discharge. This would apply to service members who have been deployed in support of operations in Iraq or Afghanistan. The bill, the National Defense Authorization Act, authorizes Department of Defense funding for activities in fiscal year 2010.

“The issue of PTSD took on added significance to me following the tragic death of one of my constituents who had served 10 months in Iraq,” Rep. Moore said. “After he came home but was still on active duty, he began to self-medicate, as do a number of soldiers who are afflicted with PTSD. This service member began using alcohol and engaging in misconduct that resulted in his eventual less-than-honorable discharge from the service. This type of discharge tragically prevented him from receiving mental health care at the VA that he desperately needed to treat his underlying PTSD.

“My constituent ultimately took his own life, leaving his family and our community to wonder if this Catch 22 tragedy could have been avoided with the mental health services from the VA. PTSD is a critically important issue facing our newest generation of veterans, and it requires the acute attention of Congress, military leaders, commanders and medical professionals.”

The legislation would also require the Department of Defense to report on the appropriate number of military mental health providers needed to meet the military’s mental health care needs. This section of the bill would also require the Department of Defense to provide a plan to ensure that these needs are met.

The bill also contains a critical provision secured by Congresswoman Moore that will allow upgrades to the 128th Air Refueling Wing at General Mitchell International Airport in Milwaukee, a hangar that serves as a military aircraft maintenance facility.

“I have been working for years to secure upgrades to the 128th Air Refueling Wing at Mitchell Airport,” Rep. Moore said. “The current hangar is simply not large enough for the aircraft that are housed there. Flying in and out of Mitchell Airport, it’s easy to see that the tails of the planes

are left exposed to the elements and subject to all kinds of adverse weather conditions. The inadequate space seriously compromises the inspection, maintenance and repair activities that take place in our hangar.

“This is the first step in finally getting some appropriate facilities for the members of the 128th so that they have the right type of space they need to perform essential maintenance on their aircraft.”

### **Other Key Provisions**

In addition to requiring a report to assist Congress with monitoring redeployment from Iraq, the National Defense Authorization bill contains a provision that will give a 3.4 percent pay raise to service members and dedicates \$1.95 billion to family housing programs. The legislation provides travel and transportation for three designated people, including non-family members, to visit hospitalized service members. The bill also includes several provisions to improve the Department of Defense’s ability to prevent and respond to sexual assault.

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